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# CHALLENGE

JOIN THE REVOLUTIONARY COMMUNIST PROGRESSIVE LABOR PARTY

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# CAPITALISM SPAWNS ENDLESS WARS

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## PL Parent, Teacher Oppose Bosses' Pledge

**BRONX, NY, March 3 —** Every day at 8:40 A.M. in an elementary school here one student instructs everyone (over the intercom) to stand and recite the pledge of allegiance as well as some patriotic song. Recently an Assistant Principal (AP) discovered that a PLP teacher does not make his students do this. The AP was furious. Both she and the principal not only wanted to force him to stand but also to ask all his students to stand as well. This is a Pre-Kindergarten class of four-year olds!

Despite the administration's fascist tactics, the PL'er didn't back down. He charged them with breaking their own rules by forcing him to stand. They said they would notify the "proper authorities" and get back to him.

Two hours after their interrogation, the AP realized she was wrong and might have to apologize. But the apology was not accepted. The PL'er spread news of this attack to other teachers and to 17 parents of the students in his classroom. All of the 17 agreed with the teacher allowing the students to do as they wished during the pledge. Eight parents disagreed with the pledge altogether and didn't want their children to stand at all.

But the dispute wasn't over. The administration said the teacher could refuse to stand for the pledge in his classroom, but his students would be escorted to the Pre-Kindergarten class next door to recite the pledge with those students. They're concentrating on feeding patriotism to the students, but a large group of resisting teachers would pose a real problem!

Some parents were unhappy with this "solution" but feared taking action, but one overcame her fear. During the winter break she attended our communist school's camping trip and joined PLP. Communist ideas are indeed powerful.

Upon her return she wrote a sharp letter attacking the administration for its fascist tactics, demanding that the students be returned to the PL'er's classroom and that no child be pressured to pledge to any flag.

Her action emboldened the other parents. Some are signing the letter. One parent asked, "Where's a pen? I'll sign. I don't pledge to this flag!" This letter will be handed to the principal, representing unity of parents and teachers against the administration's tactics of drumming nationalist propaganda into the minds of young children.

Meanwhile the teacher is building support among the faculty. Many are steady CHALLENGE readers. One told the PL'er, "Don't worry, we got your back!"

We must be confident that the working class will fight fascism. Anger towards capitalism will prevail over fear if given bold leadership from PLP comrades and friends. We pledge allegiance to the red flag of the working class! ✪

## Communist Politics Greeted at N.California Anti-War Rallies

**SACRAMENTO/SAN FRANCISCO, Feb. 24 —** PLP members in Northern California brought a much-needed dose of communist politics to anti-war rallies in these two cities on Feb. 15-16. Peace marches alone can never end imperialist wars for resources. We must organize workers, students and soldiers to wield their power and end capitalism. Only then will we experience genuine peace.

Our message was well-received, evident by the unusually large number of contacts we made at the 5,000-person rally at the state capitol. Results were similar in San Francisco, where PLP's ideas were spread to this march of nearly 150,000. Altogether, the Party distributed nearly 8,000 flyers and several hundred CHALLENGES with the special anti-war supplement.

The liberal leadership of Peace Action and a coalition called United for Peace scorned our class-based, internationalist analysis. These anti-communist liberal misleaders actually called the cops to shut down our bullhorn-powered revolutionary message. Some of our friends were particularly shocked at this, They saw first-hand how the importance and power of our revolutionary ideas are like no other at these marches, as contrasted to the misleaders' control of the rallies' political content.

In organizing for these marches, our Bay Area collective made qualitative advances. Participation in a Party study-action group led friends to actively join the Party's contingent at that weekend's events, including one recent student recruit who actively led it. Our collective involved them in producing Party literature and brought a powerful message to the masses.

These advances strengthen our Party, develop our line, and demonstrate that our revolutionary communist politics have a place in the hearts and minds of workers, students and soldiers alike! ✪

# Workers Need to Dump Chavez and Pro-Coup Bosses

As CHALLENGE reported (3/5), the most recent attempt by the old ruling class to dump Venezuela's President Chavez failed, especially because most workers and youth hate the rightwing forces. Such sentiments emerged in a recent march in Caracas honoring the February, 1989, "El Caracazo," a mass rebellion by tens of thousands opposing austerity measures imposed by Social-Democrat President Carlos Andres Perez under orders of the International Monetary Fund. The Army crushed the uprising, slaughtering hundreds (some claim 3,000). Pérez was tried for stealing billions while President. Now in exile, he helps lead the anti-Chavez forces.

**"Chavez has also allowed U.S. planes to use Venezuelan air space to spy on the anti-government guerrillas in Colombia."**

The current fight is over control of the PDVSA (one of the world's largest oil companies) and the huge oil and gas deposits in the Orinoco River. Some of the old rulers want to reap the bonanza from totally privatizing PDVSA and the oil wealth in general. Chavez represents those bosses who prefer to keep the oil wealth mostly under government control, or at least diversify it to get a better cut from different imperialists instead of solely dealing with the U.S.

But another reason for Chavez remaining in power is his promise to the U.S. government and to a section of the local bosses to control the angry workers. He also agreed to guarantee the flow of oil to the U.S. (Venezuelan crude represents 12% of all U.S. imports). So even if some in the Bush clique would prefer to dump Chavez right now, as the U.S. prepares to attack Iraq some stability is needed in this oil-producing country.

Chavez has also allowed U.S. planes to use Venezuelan air space to spy on the anti-government guerrillas in Colombia. The U.S. has already sent hundreds of troops and "advisers" to protect the Occidental Petroleum oil pipeline in Colombia near the northern border with Venezuela.

But while millions of workers and youth have demonstrated against the old bosses, they still believe Chavez will solve their problems. The fake "leftists" in Venezuela help build that illusion by supporting Chavez as the new Messiah. But history has shown that capitalism (of any kind) will never solve workers' most basic problems. Despite Chavez's pro-worker rhetoric, the basic problems suffered by workers — mass unemployment, poverty, no health care — remain.

Workers and their allies must shatter their illusions in Chavez. The most revolutionary workers and youth should take advantage of the current situation to win workers to the long, hard fight for the only lasting solution: workers' power. Venezuela's militant and massive working class has shown they're capable of running industries (without the supervisors and bosses whose recent 62-day lockout failed to topple Chavez). That's an aspect of communism: workers produce all wealth in society and can run everything. Let's make that a total reality by building a mass revolutionary communist Party.✪

## Latin America Shows Failure of Capitalism

Latin America is burning — from the long, militant medical workers and professionals in El Salvador against privatization, to the militant teachers' strike in Guatemala for better working conditions and more money for public education, to the recent rebellion in Bolivia.

Millions have witnessed the total failure of free-market capitalism. The New York Times is now reporting — in an article (3/2) entitled "Once Secure, Argentines Now Lack Food and Hope" — what regular Challenge readers have known for a long time: "19 children have died of malnutrition [in Tucuman province]....Hunger in this nation that has more cattle than people is now rampant, especially among the most vulnerable, the very young and the very old."

In Bolivia, when the government tried to raise taxes last month among workers who are now more impoverished than ever, a mass rebellion erupted. Dozens were killed. All over the region, the masses "are questioning not only the old oligarchies, but also free market policies... At the same time, governments are suffering from a worldwide economic slump,stiff foreign debts and tight budgets..The region is plagued by 'a crisis of governability, legitimacy and authority' says Gabriel Marcel, a national security expert at the U.S. Army War College." (Wall Street Journal, 2/24)

But while the masses are looking for revolutionary answers, there is no revolutionary leadership. The task of the most militant workers and youth is to forge this leadership.

## *CHALLENGE Crucial To Mass Revolutionary Consciousness*

The mass outpouring of anti-war marchers on Feb. 15 offers growing opportunity for building a revolutionary communist movement. While millions marched around the world, one important aspect of some of the U.S. marches was the openness to PLP and CHALLENGE. Many veterans of the anti-Vietnam War movement greeted the Party as a long lost friend. Many young marchers showed an interest in revolutionary communist leadership. While our voice is small now, our message is powerful. That message can grow on the rising tide of more CHALLENGE readers and distributors.

CHALLENGE shows that a fighting Party exists in the factories and mills, on the campuses and schools, in the barracks and communities, that enjoys the support of our co-workers, classmates, and others. It shows that the working class is fighting back. It exposes the role of the misleaders of the mass organizations, explains the infighting of the bosses, and shows how the struggle among the major imperialists is leading to a third world war. CHALLENGE is a ray of light in a sea of political darkness.

The coming war is both a great danger and a greater opportunity. Millions of workers and young people opposing U.S. imperialism can be won to becoming revolutionary communists. In order to win them, we must have a mass readership for CHALLENGE. Every anti-war rally should be viewed as another chance to spread mass communist consciousness through CHALLENGE. This struggle will be won or lost based on the commitment and understanding of workers and our young comrades and friends. Their efforts will make the difference.

Gaining confidence in themselves, the Party and the masses that comes from advancing communist revolution in a bold open way, will help workers and youth emerge as revolutionary communist leaders for the long haul and have a profound impact on the direction of this new anti-war movement.✪

## Workers Block War Trains Across Italy

"No ships carrying weapons or war material destined for the Gulf will sail from Italian ports," declared the head of Italy's largest transport union. Prime Minister Berlusconi is backing U.S. bosses and allowing the U.S. Army to pass through Italy on its way to the Middle East. But the dockers' union has vowed to "boycott the transport of weapons, using strike action if necessary." This declaration reflects intense rank-and-file pressure since the dock union leadership is one of the most right-wing in the country. But after the two million-strong anti-war demonstration in Rome on Feb. 15, militancy is rising. The metal workers' union has already stated it will call a general strike the day a war starts.

On Feb. 21, war convoys were chase throughout northeast Italy as they kept switching routes to avoid anti-war blockades. Since then thousands of demonstrators have been stopping the "Trains of Death" as they attempt to transport war materials to the U.S. military base at Camp Derby, near Pisa. The camp is one of the largest ammunition depots in Europe,which supplied key support in the 1991 Gulf War and in Clinton's onslaught in the Balkans. While eight Death Trains had been slated to arrive at the base by Feb.27, only four had made it due to people blocking tracks. Demonstrations and train blockages have occurred in at least 13 cities all across Italy, including Florence, Verona, Bologna and Magdalena. A national demonstration converging on Camp Derby is scheduled for March 3-8. On March 1, blockages were aimed at 22 remaining trains.✪

## *WHAT WE FIGHT FOR:*

**✪PLP fights to smash capitalism—wage slavery. While the bosses and their mouthpieces claim "communism is dead," capitalism is the real failure for billions all over the world. The Soviet Union and China returned to capitalism because socialism maintained too many aspects of capitalism, like wages and divisions of labor.**

**✪Capitalism inevitably leads to wars. PLP organizes workers, students and soldiers to turn these wars into a revolution for communism. This fight for the dictatorship of the proletariat requires a mass Red Army led by the communist PLP.**

**✪Communism means working collectively to build a society based on need. We will abolish work for wages, money and profit. Everyone will share society's benefits and burdens.**

**✪Communism means abolishing racism and the concept of race.**

**✪Communism means abolishing the special oppression of women workers.**

**✪Communism means abolishing nations which leads to nationalism. One international working class, one world, one Party.**

**✪Communism means the Party leads every aspect of society. For this to work, millions of workers, eventually everyone must become communist organizers.**

***JOIN US!***

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# Hospital Strike Proves Need For Red Ideas

"You're not just fighting the hospital, you're fighting the whole system!" declared several members of a Local 1199 union meeting at a large East Coast teaching hospital. Never was this more true than during a recent Teamsters Union strike, which was completely sabotaged by the 1199 leadership — yet another example of why workers need communist leadership.

The Teamsters struck when the hospital bosses moved to double the co-pay for their health benefits, from $33 to $66 every two weeks. After the strike's first week, the hospital obtained an injunction limiting picketing. From then on cops were parked at the main location where strikers had tried to block incoming trucks. By the end of the second week, the Teamsters agreed to most of the increase the bosses wanted. Even worse, these concessions set a pattern for the 1,000 1199C members who have contract negotiations in July and incited greater attacks on the non-union workers and on patient care.

The strike's greatest weakness was its lack of a revolutionary communist working-class outlook. How could less than 100 Teamsters shut down a major hospital without uniting with the other 6000-7000 workers?

The strike's strategy typified a union functioning within the confines of capitalism: narrowly trying to protect "our own" conditions, obeying the bosses' laws while seeking the "protection" of "sympathetic" politicians and judges who've received contributions from union political action committees. This strategy was doomed to fail and demoralizes workers for future battles. Healthcare workers especially must focus on the bosses' attacks on patient care, not restricting themselves to narrow trade union demands.

## Communist Outlook Would Be Different

First, understanding the need for communist revolution would free workers from a reformist merry-go-round of reformist struggles whose gains the bosses can always reverse with their control of state power, used to enforce their profit system. A primary goal of every strike must be advancing the fight for communist revolution, an outlook particularly needed in this era of war and fascism.

The main attack on the Teamsters stems from the capitalist class as a whole slashing healthcare budgets to finance their oil wars. And the need for maximum profits drives every boss to cut labor costs in order to compete locally and globally.

DON'T FIGHT FOR THE BOSSES' OIL PROFITS, FIGHT FOR WORKERS' POWER- "COMMUNISM!" P.L.P.
NO LUCHES POR LAS GANANCIAS PETROLERAS DE LOS PATRONES, LUCHA POR EL PODER DE LOS TRABAJADORES "EL COMUNISMO!" P.L.P.

Secondly, a key communist strategy is to spread every fight throughout the working class. Here, the Teamsters must unite with the 1,000 1199 members. Such potential unity worries the hospital bosses, which is why they banned sick or vacation days during the strike, which might give strike supporters leeway in refusing to cross picket lines.

Working-class unity also worried the pro-capitalist union leaders of 1199C. They tried to squash it at an emergency delegates' meeting on the strike's third day, telling them there was nothing 1199 could do to help the strikers, that they shouldn't even stand by the Teamsters picket lines. The Local 1199 leadership warned the delegates that they "were on their own" if they got in trouble for supporting the strikers.

But some of the 1199 delegates and members defied these edicts. In the strike's first week. a group marched on the office of a hospital vice-president, forcing the bosses to pay workers sick and vacation time during the walkout. Some 1199 union delegates also found ways to prevent the crossing of picket lines for hours at a time, as well as giving tactical information and leadership and collecting donations to help the strikers.

PLP literature and assistance were welcomed by many workers. Our strike flyer was widely distributed and so sought after that one surprised friend commented that the workers were boldly reading this communist paper right in front of their bosses, "like it was a regular newspaper and they had nothing to be afraid of." For PLP members and friends this strike was a helpful school for revolution.✪

# East Coast PLP School Builds For A Communist World

Four of 17 parents, teachers and students from Brooklyn, the Bronx, Westchester and Connecticut joined PLP after attending a weekend communist school to discuss and analyze a 1982 party document, *For Communist Economics, For Communist Power* (see PLP.org for a copy). Two Party comrades from the City University of NY were the main organizers.

The weekend began with a talk about the birth of capitalism and moved into smaller workshops. Prepared questions supplemented our readings and sparked lively discussions, beginning with what people thought would be the most effective way to organize society. This eventually led to issues of collectivity versus individualism and communist centralism versus capitalist democracy.

Towards the end of our workshops, one parent said, "It's hard to fight for communism if you don't have an idea of what it's going to look like. This weekend really helped give me a better understanding of that." This parent later said she mostly agreed with PLP's ideas, and although not ready to join now, consented to meet with a club and make plans to build an anti-racist action group within her church.

Watching a video depicting our annual May Day march encouraged us to become May Day organizers in our schools and mass organizations.

One Bronx parent, two Westchester students and another from Brooklyn joined PLP at our closing discussion. The parent and a PLP teacher is leading a struggle in her daughter's elementary school against the administration pressure on students and teachers to recite the pledge of allegiance (see front page). These two comrades and another parent from the same elementary school also agreed to print stickers saying, "I pledge to stop the war!" and encourage parents and teachers to wear them in school. She said her experience on the camping trip strengthened her commitment to join PLP.

All the new student members were inspired to lead struggles at their schools against the war in Iraq, including walkouts and rallies in the event of an actual U.S. invasion. We agreed to expand our involvement in the anti-war movement but understood that only a communist world can truly end imperialist wars altogether. This weekend school gave us confidence to advance these ideas. We plan to double the attendance next year and further intensify the fight for communism.✪

# Capitalist Medicine Is One Big Malpractice

West Virginia doctors, like others in NY, Illinois and Florida, recently struck to reduce malpractice premiums and protect the quality of medical care. Dr. Robert Zaleski, an orthopedic surgeon, told CNN, "The number of qualified surgeons has decreased in this area. It…is a quality-of-care issue. We used to have three neurosurgeons. We now have none…If I…cannot afford [to[…keep my office open, patients would be without my care. My insurance has risen over a factor of a hundred…since…1980." He said he would have to borrow $150,000 for his malpractice insurance in order to stay open next year.

The striking doctors charged that politicians and hospital owners have ignored the problem. Meanwhile, President Bush, the insurance industry, the Institute of Medicine and the Robert Wood Johnson Foundation are demanding a severe legal cap on claims and awards. The collapse of the dot.com bubble has driven giant insurance companies to squeeze patients and medical workers harder than ever to recoup their stock market losses.

In the U.S., nearly 98,000 people die annually from medical mistakes. A huge number are caused by understaffing, overworked doctors-in-training, too few hospital beds, use of under-trained workers for direct patient care and direct cost-saving measures to maximize profit. Care is fragmented between hospitals and specialty clinics. Health workers are given extra work while others are laid off to reduce costs. Patient information is spread over different locations, providers are too rushed for good charting and records departments are understaffed. Under these dangerous, profit-driven conditions, it's a miracle there aren't more mistakes. Actually health workers catch over 90% of mistakes themselves.

The medical malpractice system forces workers to seek redress as isolated individuals at the mercy of the legal system. Health bosses save billions by doing nothing fundamental about dangerous conditions. Instead they absorb, or force doctors to absorb claims and insurance premiums. Only one mistake in eight makes it to court; only one in 16 reaps an award. And their value has not risen, adjusted for inflation.

Malpractice awards account for only one-half of one percent of healthcare costs, but the bosses and their politicians want to lower them drastically. Capping malpractice awards is part of capitalism's preparation for war, increased poverty, an aging population and endless budget deficits. Huge health cuts will produce far more mistakes, injuries and deaths. The industry wants to ward off a flood of future suits. Lower malpractice awards are just one more assault in a class war — rising unemployment, homelessness and lack of medical care, especially for millions without insurance. Ongoing Medicare cuts will leave millions more without insurance. The profit drive by HMOs and insurance giants puts a greater burden than ever on doctors, in one of the shabbiest care systems among industrially developed nations. Only a communist society run by and for the working class, without bosses and a profit-driven health care system, can provide the best possible care and preventive medicine.

To defend ourselves, we should avoid the trap of supporting liberals with band-aid reform plans that ultimately mean no reform at all. Capitalism cannot be reformed. PLP hospital workers and healthcare professionals are playing active, leading roles in the fight against the attacks on workers' health. We invite others to write CHALLENGE on this struggle and help clarify our position on major issues in the medical field.✪

# MILLIONS EXPOSED TO MURDEROUS NATURE

## Liberals: Wolves in Sheep's Clothing

Every opportunity has its share of danger. The burgeoning anti-war movement is no exception. Mass hatred of Bush is good but it doesn't go far enough. The Bush "hawks" represent only one viewpoint among U.S. rulers. The liberals who oppose their timing for the next war represent the other. The liberals constitute the main political danger because they offer sugar-coated poison instead of Bush's clearly-labeled bottle.

The difference is purely tactical. It is crucial to expose this fact within the mass movement. It can win new recruits to communism and begin to change the relationship of forces in the class struggle.

CHALLENGE has shown that the mainstream liberals, led by the New York Times, and the key liberal think-tanks, led by the Council on Foreign Relations and the Brookings Institution, fully endorse the idea that the U.S. must rule the world. They agree on the need to dominate Persian Gulf oil and to seize the Iraqi oil fields. They back "homeland security," which is just a disguise for a fascist police state to discipline the working class and prevent mass rebellion when the going gets tough. No strategic differences separate them and the Bush crowd.

Kenneth Pollack, Clinton's Director for Gulf Affairs on the National Security Council from 1999-2001, writes in a new book about war in Iraq: "We have to do it right," by which he means that, among other needs, the U.S. must secure the support of key Middle Eastern states and its European and Asian allies and commit enough resources to establish a stable post-war Iraq. Without that commitment, Pollack says an invasion could create as many problems as it solves.

The liberals fear that by launching his war now, Bush is taking a gamble that may explode in his face and severely compromise U.S. imperialism's strategic goals. Their main objections are:

•Bush seems to think that the war will end quickly and easily. The liberals warn that controlling the Iraqi oilfields will require an occupying army with no end in sight and will mean huge expense and unforeseeable casualties, for which Bush hasn't adequately prepared a political base. "Vietnam Syndrome" continues to haunt the liberals.

•Bush arrogantly thumbs his nose at the international capitalist pecking order established after World War II and acts as though U.S. imperialism's present military superiority gives it unlimited political maneuverability. The liberals counter that Iraq is just the first step in securing the entire Middle East and that this job requires making deals to give significant junior partnerships to oil rivals like the French and Russians. The liberals worry that in the short run, an isolated U.S. will overextend itself in the Persian Gulf, and that in the long run, Bush's policies will encourage the Europeans to develop their own military with a view toward a potential confrontation with the U.S. As Philip Gordon writes in Foreign Affairs (Jan.-Feb. 2003): "With a collective population of 377 million and a GDP of some $8.5 trillion, the member states of the European Union certainly have the potential to develop formidable military power…"

•Bush's economic policy calls for making war and at the same time granting tax cuts for his wealthy buddies. The liberals point to the potential costs of the Iraq war alone (somewhere between $60 and $200 billion) and attack Bush for flubbing the opportunity to install "homeland security" fascism. For example, they complain that Bush has barely found 10% of the $3 billion needed to militarize U.S. commercial ports.

•Bush points to polls that favor his Iraq war plans. The liberals counter that "95 percent of the country" doesn't want this war (Thomas Friedman, New York Times, 3/2) and worry openly about the potential for social unrest if Bush goes ahead without a firmly established "homeland security" system.

This is the strategic viewpoint of the liberals who are now attempting to mislead the burgeoning anti-war movement. They want an oil war to maintain U.S. supremacy, but they want it under more favorable conditions than Bush has prepared. If we follow these liberal bosses, they will lead us over a cliff. Communists have always maintained that under the profit system, no such thing as a "lesser evil" boss exists. We must fight to smash all of them.✪

### Are Liberals Rooting for Another 9/11 to Build Support for War and A Police State?

**U.S. Coast Guard Commander Stephen E. Flynn is also a Senior Fellow at the Council of Foreign Relations. Updating a year-old article in Foreign Affairs entitled "America the Vulnerable," he writes: "Much to my dismay, it likely will take a second catastrophic attack on U.S. soil to inspire a serious reexamination of the needs and means of homeland security."✪**

## Union Helps Bethlehem Steal Retirees' Benefits

The bankrupt Bethlehem Steel Corp. will terminate health care and life insurance benefits for 95,000 retired workers and their dependents on March 31. It's part of a swindle enabling the International Steel Group (ISG) to take over Bethlehem's assets while shedding liabilities such as workers' health care, insurance and pensions. ISG — now the largest integrated steel producer in North America — will acquire a major cost-cutting advantage against their European and Japanese rivals, on the backs of U.S. steelworkers. And the United Steel Workers union played a "central role" in paving this road to workers' ruin.

This development is a classic example of how capitalism's inherent drive for maximum profits, combined with fascism in the guise of "democracy," screws workers. After World War II, the Japanese and European steel barons rebuilt their bombed out industry with more modern technology while U.S. steel bosses held onto their aging mills. This put the latter at a big competitive disadvantage.

Since capitalists must drive for maximum profits to stay in business, U.S. steel bosses decided they would have to regain some competitive edge. While some small non-union producers built more modern mills, the larger unionized companies moved to break their unionized workforces in order to invest in the new technology. Rather than engage in openly fascist union-busting, in classic capitalist style they used their laws and their courts to "democratically" do the job for them.

First, many of the larger ones merged with, or absorbed, smaller companies, killing tens of thousands of jobs in the process. Then over the past five years 33 steel companies — including major manufacturers like LTV, Wheeling-Pittsburgh, Bethlehem and National — declared bankruptcy. To help them out of bankruptcy, the courts would then O.K. the steel barons' breaking of their union contracts and imposition of drastic cuts or outright elimination of jobs, benefits and pensions — union-busting accomplished all "according to law," but a fascist attack on the workers nonetheless.

Central to this operation are Wall Street creations like ISG, an investment outfit that specializes in buying bankrupt companies by collecting their assets and dumping their liabilities — mainly workers' benefits. This latest assault on retired steelworkers' health coverage and pensions at Bethlehem was described by its CEO as a "dramatic turnaround…made possible by the innovative [!] new labor agreement with the USWA…and by President Bush's courageous steel trade program."

What was the union's role in all this? In favoring Bethlehem's sale to ISG and the bankruptcy court's O.K. of killing the workers' benefits, USWA president Leo Girard declared, "We are greatly encouraged by this decision because it represents another major stride towards the humane [!] consolidation of the American steel industry that our union is playing a central role in bringing about. Our goal has been to assure that [our senior members can retire], confident that their pension will provide the security and dignity that a lifetime of hard work has earned them." [!]

The social fascist union leader Gerard's "central role" is to guarantee that the consolidation of the steel industry proceeds with no strikes or disruptions as union contracts are voided — "democratically" — and workers are screwed out of their jobs, health benefits and pensions after a "lifetime of hard work." All to enable the steel bosses to compete with their rivals for maximum profits in the global market. What else is new for the "labor lieutenants of capital"?✪

## U.N Report Proves U.S. and 'Allies' Gave Iraq Weapons Technology

Iraq's 11,000-page report to the UN Security Council lists 150 foreign countries that supplied Saddam Hussein with technology for its nuclear, chemical, biological and missile weapons programs from 1975 onward. They include 24 U.S. corporations, 80 from Germany and others from Britain, France and China. The U.S. equipment-suppliers for Saddam's weapons of mass destruction included Honeywell, Dupont, Hewlett Packard, Eastman Kodak, Bechtel, Sperry Corp., Rockwell and Unisys as well as the foremost U.S. nuclear laboratories at Lawrence Livermore, Los Alamos and Sandia. In addition, nearly 50 subsidiaries of foreign countries operated its arms cooperation with Iraq from the U.S.

This occurred at a time when Iraq was considered a bulwark against the spread of Iran's influence in the Arab world. It covered the period of Saddam's rise to power and during his worst crimes.

The information was revealed in the German newspaper Die Tageszeitung and reprinted in the UK Independent (12/18). The Berlin paper got hold of a copy of the Iraqi document and reported that, "From about 1975 onwards, these companies…supplied entire complexes, building elements, basic materials and technical know-how…to develop nuclear, chemical and biological weapons of mass destruction" as well as "rockets and complete conventional weapons systems."

When the Iraqi report first appeared, the U.S. immediately pulled out all stops to get first access and to shut down its widespread dissemination. They censored part of the original dossier before it was handed to the five permanent Security Council members. It then edited the copies given two weeks later to the other 10 countries in the Council.

The U.S. rulers' phony justification for its invasion of Iraq — in actuality to control its vast oil resources and through that the Middle East itself — is based on that country's possession of weapons of mass destruction, the very weapons for which the U.S. and others readily supplied the technology. All's fair in imperialist war.✪

# OF IMPERIALISM, OPEN TO RED IDEAS

## U.S. Rulers Seen As World's Greatest Terrorists

Bush still seems hell-bent on launching war in Iraq very soon. Even when Saddam Hussein complies with aspects of the UN weapons inspection farce — as he appeared to do at the end of February — the Bush gang counters by adding a new, unmeetable demand. The latest "rule change" is Bush's requirement that Saddam either surrender power or go into exile to avoid war. Maybe Bush's next move will be to insist that Saddam commit suicide.

But as CHALLENGE has frequently pointed out, Bush isn't the only war maker among U.S. bosses. They all agree in essence that the U.S. must continue to rule the world and that control of Iraqi oil remains crucial to that goal. The real division between Bush and the liberals within the U.S. ruling class concerns the best timing and conditions for launching this war.

On February 15 and 16, a new development caught the bosses napping. Millions in the U.S., Europe, the Middle East (including Israel), Russia, Africa, Asia, Australasia and Latin America — and Antarctica! — took to the streets in massive demonstrations opposing Bush's war plan. These marches had an air of spontaneous militancy that went far beyond the pacifism and class collaboration pushed by their leadership. Everywhere hatred of Bush and of U.S. imperialism made itself heard loud and clear. Unlike the Vietnam War period, when the protest movement gathered steam only after the fighting and bloodshed had reached a certain point, mass opposition to Desert Storm II is already a fact of life. Many workers, students, intellectuals and others now view U.S. imperialism as the world's greatest terrorist threat.

This consciousness isn't enough to overthrow U.S. imperialism or to stop its war plans, but it presents the international working class and our Party with our best opportunity for growth in many years. Whenever the rulers launch their war for Iraqi oil, millions of people will oppose it. Many of them will look toward leadership that explains the true causes of such wars and that offers a lasting solution. Only the Progressive Labor Party can provide these. Only communists can show that the profit system inevitably leads to war and that nothing short of communist revolution can provide a viable alternative.

History has shown one must take the long view, especially in a period such as the present one when class struggle clearly favors the bosses. Fighting to advance a communist line and to sharpen class struggle remains the same, regardless of circumstances. The international working class has endured a devastating defeat in the collapse of the old communist movement. Dialectical materialism teaches one to remain objective and accept the idea that in difficult periods, even hard work may yield only meager results. But things change. Even the worst defeats can be overcome, and the new worldwide upsurge in anti-war, anti-imperialist sentiment proves this point.

A new situation appears to be developing. The soil in which to plant communist ideas is becoming more fertile. In the shops and communities, on the campuses and in the schools and in the military, we can see signs of a new openness to communist concepts and tactics. But positive change doesn't fall from the sky. Nothing good comes without great effort. We still have our work cut out for us. The road ahead remains long and uphill. But whenever this war starts, we will have an important opportunity to fight for our communist ideas, to increase the circulation of CHALLENGE, to influence the mass movement away from the liberal enemy within and, above all, to win recruits to the PLP. This is the spirit in which we must approach the home stretch of building for May Day 2003.✪

# No Blood for Petrodollars or Euros

Oil is not just another commodity. Major industries, armies, transportation and society overall cannot run without it. Most of the world's oil (and the cheapest to produce) is in the Middle East. The power that controls that oil has a major advantage over rival bosses. Oil is also a major source of profits and economic power.

Currently anyone buying crude oil must pay OPEC or any oil producer in dollars. Therefore, such buyers must accumulate dollars to pay for their oil. To do that they must exchange their own currency for dollars or demand dollars for what they themselves produce. Thus, the dollar dominates world trade; it is the world's reserve currency.

Several decades ago, the U.S. became a debtor country. It is now the world's biggest debtor nation, owing $2.7 trillion. It then prints more dollars which are bought by currency traders to build dollar reserves. The U.S. uses these funds to pay off the $2 billion a day required to satisfy the debt. In a sense, U.S. bosses are getting a "free ride" through its exclusive control over printing dollars. Since this is the currency in which oil is traded — petrodollars — the U.S. has an edge over its rivals both in economic terms as well as having a stranglehold over the distribution of oil.

The world economic crisis exposed by the dot.com collapse made others bosses wary of playing second fiddle to the U.S. forever. The law of inter-imperialist rivalry (each group of bosses must fight for maximum profits at the expense of rival bosses) impelled the European Union to create the Euro to challenge the dollar. The value of the Euro has surpassed the value of the dollar by 17%. Three years ago Iraq began demanding Euros instead of dollars for its oil exports. Iran is contemplating a similar move. As countries are forced to accumulate Euros instead of dollars, the value of the Euro will rise and the dollar will fall even further. This could conceivably induce the Oil Producing and Exporting Countries (OPEC) — Saudi Arabia, Venezuela, etc. — to ask for Euros for their oil. Oil-buying countries would have to stock Euros in their central banks to buy their oil. The more Euros are used to purchase oil — the world's most important and expensive commodity — the less would oil be traded in dollars. The value of the dollar would drop even further. U.S. corporations and consumers would have to shell out more dollars to purchase goods. This could severely affect the U.S. economy.

All this is one reason why U.S. bosses want to seize Iraq and its oil fields, second largest reserves worldwide. Not only would its military muscle control Iraq and force its oil (controlled by ExxonMobil and ChevronTexaco, etc.) to be paid for with dollars instead of Euros, but it would solidify U.S. control in the Mid-East region, the world's largest source of oil. It would also help U.S rulers maintain the dollar as the world's reserve currency.

### European Imperialists Are No Peace-makers

This is one important reason why EU members France and Germany — two leading traders in Euros — are fighting a U.S. invasion of Iraq and control of its oil. Some of the leaders of the anti-war movement are trying to turn it into an anti-U.S., pro-European imperialism force. This is a deadly mistake; the cause of war is not Bush or Blair, but capitalism/imperialism.

Russia, which is siding with the Europeans in this battle and is the world's second largest oil exporter, is considering the Euro as the currency to buy some of its oil. It's an economic fight between petrodollars and petroeuros.

Further pressure on the U.S. is coming from China, which wants its currency, the yuan, to become Asia's reserve currency. Even Venezuela has put pressure on petrodollars by negotiating bi-lateral deals with 13 countries to pay for its oil in goods — barter — not in dollars. All this reduces the amount of dollars used in world trade, further reducing its value, and nullifying part of the "free ride" the U.S. gets in printing dollars to pay its huge trade deficit.

Thus do capitalists and imperialists fight for maximum profits over the dead bodies of millions of workers. U.S. rivals will strive to equal U.S. military power. U.S. bosses will try mightily to prevent this. We have no crystal ball, but the 21st Century promises to mirror the 20th: constant wars.

Shouldn't such a system be destroyed? Join the communist PLP now.✪

# Did U.S. SET GULF WAR OIL FIRES IN KUWAIT?

Remember those images in the U.S. media of huge fires covering the oil fields of Kuwait during the first Gulf War? How U.S. rulers declared that Iraq was responsible? Now Gulf War veterans are charging that these fires were set by U.S. forces.

A press release from the American Gulf War Veterans Association (AGWVA) says that, "For the past six years the AGWVA have received numerous reports from veterans stating that US forces were responsible for setting the oil well fires at the end of the Gulf War….

"One veteran has now stepped forward and given a detailed account of how he and others in special teams moved forward of the front (behind enemy lines ahead of US forces) and then set charges on the well heads. 'We were mustered into the briefing tent at which point a gentleman whom I first had thought to be an American began to brief us on the operation. I was concerned because he was not wearing a US uniform and insignias.'

"The information provided over a series of meetings with this veteran corroborates reports from other veterans who are totally unconnected with this individual."

The AGWVA also reports that, "Of the nearly 700,000 participants in the Persian Gulf war, over 279,000 have now come forward stating they are sick as a result of their service in Desert Storm. They are not just sick, they are dying (Senate Report 103-900)." (For more information, see Gulfwarvets.com or e-mail to Gulfwar@dam.net)

For nearly a decade the U.S. military denied there was any such illness as "Gulf War Syndrome." Many of the cases were later traced to vaccines administered to U.S. troops.✪

# Yale: Enemy of Workers Worldwide

**NEW HAVEN, CT., March 5 —** More than 6,000 workers at Yale University here are fighting this $11 billion corporation for job security, decent pensions, higher wages and the right to unionize. They include maintenance, clerical, technical, food service and Yale-New Haven hospital workers, as well as graduate school teaching assistants. The dietary workers have been without a contract for two years. Many workers need two or three jobs to survive.

This is the first time all these groups of workers have struck together. Workers walked out for the five days before the college's spring break. They plan to continue the fight when the school reconvenes.

Yale is one of the U.S. ruling class's sources of research and ideology for conducting its imperialist oil wars. Yale and Iraqi workers are victimized by the same bosses. International working-class unity is crucial in the fight against U.S. exploiter/killers, at home and abroad.✪

# WORKERS OF THE WORLD WRITE!

## Party's Boldness Makes a Difference

What a delight it was to see PLP at the anti-war demonstration and to hear the old familiar chants as you marched behind us for a while. Your presence makes a difference. For example, one friend of ours had never seen our bold open rallies before. He said he was very impressed with the response to the Party standing in the street and openly calling for communist revolution.

Another friend with us had been relating his experiences investigating leftist parties. Well, he noticed you! He started asking questions about your multi-racial group. When we told him PLP was an integrated Party that includes workers, with a significant number of black and Latin workers and youth at the march and in leadership, he was very impressed. Now he wants to come to some meetings.

The vast majority of the groups at the march were either all or mostly white. This reflects the neo-racist weakness of the whole U.S. anti-war movement. We encourage the Party to mobilize its entire base, especially black and Latin workers and youth, to participate in these marches and show in action our opposition to racism and nationalism. So thanks again!

*Some old friends*

## Students Don't Buy Shuttle Patriotism

I'm a science teacher in an urban high school. On the Monday following the explosion of the Columbia Space Shuttle, the principal made a special announcement, reiterating that the astronauts were "heroes" and that their loss was a "national tragedy. "She said there was a special circular in the Main Office we were required to pick up and we should spend part of our class time discussing this incident. There was still another circular the next day.

My immediate reaction to the publicity and mourning over this incident was that something else must be happening. When hundreds are killed in an airplane crash, it isn't called a "national tragedy" nor are the pilots and passengers labeled "heroes." Recently a baby and two elderly women died due to lack of heat. No one characterized this a "national tragedy." Clearly they froze to death, but the medical examiner listed the cause of death as "heart failure complicated by hypothermia" (low body temperature). That's like saying the people the Nazis killed with poison gas died of asphyxiation!

I decided to follow the principal's "suggestion" and discuss the situation in class, but not the way she probably wanted. When a student asked, "Why are they heroes?" I replied that the astronauts have a military connection and the government wants us to believe all military personnel are heroes, especially with the coming oil war in Iraq. Nobody objected to this analysis. Moreover, no one was very upset over the Shuttle crash. This indicated the students weren't buying into the patriotism crap.

I also mentioned the people who had frozen to death and said this and other working-class oppression were the real national tragedies. All in all, the discussion went quite well.

*A Comrade*

## OVERCOMING FEAR

I work with a retirees' group that fights for labor causes. Articles we contribute to a newsletter are sometimes rejected or cut drastically because the group is tied to the AFL-CIO which suppresses criticism of unions, the electoral system and war.

The group's leadership hesitates to back anti-racist struggles. While most labor publications run articles about past struggles, I wrote one for Black History Month, documenting racist oppression of black people today.

At a newsletter meeting, the group's chairman — who serves as the guardian of the AFL-CIO policies mentioned above — attacked my article. He said I had "some nerve" to write about Black History since I am white and that he, a Jew, would be insulted if a non-Jew wrote about Jewish problems.

The next two speakers, both black, said the article was informative and didn't offend them. The following speaker said he was Jewish and had participated in the Civil Rights struggle hand-in-hand with people from many backgrounds and that he wished other groups would have stood with Jews when the Nazis attacked them. The group overrode the chairman's objections and approved my piece, featuring it as the lead article. This confirms that racism is very much an issue in the labor movement.

I'm learning that the key to overcoming fear of workers' rejection is not to be isolated but to consult them in any fight. It's not so important if a struggle is lost or if workers back down but that we bring our ideas to, and work in a mass way with, the rank and file, not through leaders. Even if workers disagree, if we work collectively, positive things will happen.

*A retiree*

# RED EYE ON THE NEWS

**BELOW ARE EXCERPTS FROM MAINSTREAM NEWSPAPERS THAT CONTAIN IMPORTANT INFORMATION:Abbreviations: NYT=New York Times, GW=Guardian Weekly (UK)**

**Redo 'Survivor' with pols?**

I'd like to see a more realistic remake of "Survivor." In my version, a group of politicians is dropped onto…unfamiliar terrain….Each is given two young children to raise and a minimum wage job an hour's bus ride away. Contestants…pay rent, child care, utilities and groceries….

It might not be "Survivor," but I think a producer ought to give it a shot….

San Francisco Chronicle, 1/22

**In a democracy, if you're starving, it's not famine**!

The winner of the 1998 Nobel Memorial Prize in Economic Science, Mr. Sen….is famous for his assertion that famines do not occur in democracies. "No famine has ever taken place in the history of the world in a functioning democracy," he wrote in "Democracy as Freedom." (Anchor, 1999) This, he explained is because democratic governments "have to win elections and face pubic criticism, and have strong incentive to undertake measure to avert famines and other catastrophes." This proposition, advance in a host of books and articles, has shaped the thinking of a generation of policy makers, scholars and relief workers who deal with famine.

Now, however, in India, the main focus of Mr. Sen's research, there are growing reports of starvation in drought-ravaged states like Rajasthan in the west and Orissa in the east, many families have been reduced to eating bark and grass to stay alive. Already thousands may have died. This is occurring against a backdrop of endemic hunger and malnutrition. About 350 million of India's one billion people go to bed hungry every night, and half of all India's children are malnourished. Meanwhile, the country is awash in grain, with the government sitting on a surplus of more than 50 million tons….

Mr. Sen said…."We must distinguish between the role of democracy in preventing famine and the comparative ineffectiveness of democracy in preventing regular undernourishment." (NYT, 3/1)

**No checks for neediest**

The numbers are shameful. Only 43 percent of workers who are unemployed actually receive unemployment benefits. In some states the number is…25 percent….

For example, many low-wage workers simply don't make the eligibility cut established by the government even as they perform some of the hardest and most menial jobs….Temporary and part-time workers are less likely to receive benefits….The bottom line is that women, people of color, immigrants and single parents are disproportionately protected…. (Newsday)

**Bankrupt? Rob pensions!**

A federal judge ruled this weekend that US Airways could dissolve its pilots' union pension fund as it seeks to reorganize under bankruptcy protection….The judge's ruling makes a legal challenge more likely…at other distressed airlines, said Robert W. Mann, Jr., an airline industry consultant….

"The US Airways…situation," Mr. Mann said, "is becoming a blueprint or a map which is being read by management at other carriers." (NYT, 3/3)

**No jobs for U.S. youth**

You see them…hanging out…wherever they can, drifting in some cases into the devastating clutches of drug-selling, gang membership, prostitution or worse.

In Chicago there are nearly 100,000 young people, ages 16 to 24, who are out of work, out of school and all but out of hope. In New York City there are more than 200,000….

This army of uneducated, jobless young people, disconnected in most instances from society's mainstream, is restless and unhappy….

"I don't think I can take it much longer," said Angjell Brackins….

She has tried for months to find a job, she said, filling out application after application, to no avail. "I'll do any kind of work if they'll just hire me. It doesn't matter, as long as it's a job…."

When you have 5½ million young people wandering around without diplomas, without jobs and without prospects, you might as well hand them T-shirts to wear that say, "We're Trouble." (NYT Op-Ed, 2/6)

**Immigrant roundup: why?**

The roundup of hundreds of immigrants after Sept. 11, 2001, yielded not one indictment in the attack. (Newsday, 2/13)

**Diplomat quits over war**

United Nations, Feb. 26 — A career diplomat who has served in United States embassies from Tel Aviv to Casablanca to Yerevan resigned this week in protest against the country's policies on Iraq….

Mr. Kiesling, 45, who has been a diplomat for about 20 years….wrote Mr. Powell: "We should ask ourselves why we have failed to persuade more of the world that a war with Iraq is necessary. We have over the past two years done too much to assert to our world partners that narrow and mercenary U.S. interests override the cherished values of our partners."

His letter continued: The model of Afghanistan is little comfort to allies wondering on what basis we plan to rebuild the Middle East, and in whose image and interests…."

Asked if his views were widely shared…Mr. Kiesling said: "No one of my colleagues is comfortable with our policy…" (NYT, 2/27)